

same word by specialists and propagandists. There is, too, more than a tendency to attach neat, Greek-derived tickets to phenomena and to think we have thus explained them, or on the other hand, to shun certain avenues of exploration because they habitually bear labels to which we are allergic : 'give a dog a bad name . . .' Both nominolatry and nominophobia can be present in the same patient. We have to cultivate awareness that our words are not last words, not explanations which end discussion and search, but labels to be discarded if found inadequate or untrue. We all have to try to divest ourselves of racial, professional and other prejudices and superstitions such as Tyrrell, perhaps with the clairvoyance of those about to die, pointed out at the end of his life. It is easy to discern and criticize motes in popular beliefs or in other specialists. But beams in our own eye are harder to cast out.

It is a delicate matter for the layman to point to occasions of error in the fields of specialists. Yet he, being free from their professional prejudices as to possibility and impossibility, and having perhaps a smattering of other branches of knowledge and their correlation, may be in a legitimate position for reminding them that in all its history science has never yet found any walls to discovery, though at every stage there were official scientists and official priests who declared they had reached the *nec plus ultra* of knowledge, human and divine. Perhaps fewer today say this explicitly, but just as many act and think as if it were true. It is essential to progress that searching eyes and fingers should constantly be moving forward. But their groping must not be confined within blinkers. They also have to be watchful sideways, upwards, downwards, backwards, inwards. Not all the lore of marginal seekers, or of past sages, or of insight, is irrelevant. Nor can any sector of the knowledge front advance without modifying the shape of the whole, or without support from the other sectors, or without drawing them after it.

V. P. UNDERWOOD

Chertsey,
Surrey.

OBITUARY: COUNT PEROVSKY-PETROVO-SOLOVOVO

COUNT Perovsky-Petrovo-Solovovo, then Mr Michael Solovioy, joined the Society in 1890 : after he succeeded to the title of Count he was, through ignorance of correct Russian usage, generally

known in the Society as 'Count Solovovo'. When he joined, the Society had just begun the collection of cases for the Census of Hallucinations, the report on which was published in Vol. x of *Proceedings*. His collection of Russian cases for the Census marked the beginning of an activity in psychical research which continued so long as his health permitted. His main interest, however, lay in 'physical phenomena', both as investigator and as critic of the problems of evidence specially raised by that branch of research.

For example, among the mediums he investigated was the Russian, Sambor (died 1902), whose phenomena greatly impressed him, as they suggested the passage of matter through matter. But he later discovered to his horror that one of the controllers, a personal friend of his own and a man of high social and official standing, who was supposed to be controlling one of the medium's hands, was not doing so. When pressed by Count Solovovo the friend most solemnly denied any intention to deceive, but Count Solovovo did not believe him. The friend's action threw suspicion not only on the genuineness of these particular phenomena, but on the trustworthiness of other records in which the *bona fides* of some one investigator or controller was crucial. In describing his experiments with Sambor (*Journal*, xxx, 89) he said, 'Who can tell how often such incidents may have taken place elsewhere without being known?'

He early took an interest in the controversy on Eusapia Paladino, and in 1910 had an opportunity of investigating her himself. In the preceding year the Feilding-Baggally-Carrington report, favourable to her genuineness, had been published in *Proceedings* xxiii, but reports in the contrary sense were also current. To set, it was hoped, the question at rest Count and Countess Solovovo co-operated with Feilding and W. Marriott in a short series of sittings at Naples. In the report (*Proc.*, xxv, 57-69) on these sittings he declared himself favourably impressed, though not absolutely convinced, by some of the phenomena, but very unfavourably impressed by the medium's determined resistance to effective control.

In the early days of psychical research the question had been raised whether, when observers too competent to be taken in by ordinary tricks reported paranormal phenomena verging on the incredible, they might not have suffered from hallucination or illusion induced by seance-room conditions. In *Proc.* xxi Count Solovovo and Alice Johnson had an interesting and detailed discussion of this problem, to which he returned in his paper 'Les Phénomènes Physiques du Spiritisme' (*Proc.*, xxv, 413-46). These papers show

well the strong but reasoned spirit of criticism which informed all his work.

He was for many years the Society's Hon. Secretary for Russia. At the time of the Revolution he was serving on a diplomatic mission abroad, and so escaped with his life though with the loss of his considerable wealth. He faced with great courage the change in his fortunes, and earned a modest living by writing for the press in Brussels and elsewhere, being well qualified for this by his mastery of several languages and his experience of public affairs. For several years he reviewed for our *Journal* continental journals devoted to psychical research.

On rare occasions the Society has recognized eminent service to psychical research by conferring Honorary membership, and in 1918 Count Solovovo was clearly marked out for this recognition. In 1936 he made his home in London, and gave our members the pleasure, which I think he shared himself, of a personal interchange of opinions on subjects which all his life long had engaged his interest and activity. Some years before his death he further strengthened his ties with us by acquiring British citizenship.

W. H. S.